DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 281 056 CE 047 030

TITLE	Working Together--An Approach to Functional Literacy. 3rd Edition.
INSTITUTION	Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit, London (England).
REPORT NO	ISBN-0-906509-06-8
PUB DATE	87
NOTE	77p.
PUB TYPE	Guides - Classroom Use - Guides (For Teachers) (052)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC04 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Adult Basic Education; Adult Education; *Adult Literacy; Foreign Countries; *Functional Literacy; Illiteracy; *Literacy Education; Needs Assessment; *Reading Skills; *Student Needs; Writing Skills

ABSTRACT

This book is intended to help adult literacy tutors look at the variety of reading tasks in the adult world and see what use they can make of them with their students. In Chapter 1, the tutor looks in depth at all the reading and writing tasks adults do. The message and medium aspects of literacy are introduced. Chapter 2 presents an overview of the need to choose relevant tasks and discusses the message and medium aspects in more detail. A selection of real-life tasks is listed; a suggested list of relevant literacy skills is also provided. Finally, five sets of questions are suggested to help tutors relate these skills to student needs. Chapter 3 contains four separate, detailed examples of adult reading and writing tasks, with activities relating these to the structures suggested in Chapter 2. In Chapter 4 the tutor is asked to work through one of the tasks with other tutors. Ways in which teachers in groups might use the ideas in the book are suggested. A section addressed to organizers asks them to consider the training and resource needs of this approach. An appendix raises three issues helpful in implementing the approach: newsletter production, tape recorder use, and text simplification. (YLB)

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WORKING TOGETHER

AN APPROACH TO FUNCTIONAL LITERACY

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Acknowledgements

We would like to express our thanks to all the people who have helped in making this book especially

- Rosie Watson of Haringey
- Juliet McCaffery and Jay Derrick of The Friends Centre, Brighton, for the appendix on Newsletters.
- Ursula Rohde who was one of the two authors of 'Dealing with the System'

Rosemary Eggar
Roy Grant
Ruth Lesirge
Tom MacFarlane
Alan Tuckett

First published in 1977 by the Adult Literacy Resource Agency. 2nd Edition published in 1981, 3rd Edition published 1987 by the Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit.

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Preface

This book was first published under the title 'An Approach to Functional Literacy – A manual for Adult Literary Tutors' in February 1977 by the Adult Literacy Resource Agency.

In 1976 ALRA organised two national workshops on teaching material which were followed by a number of similar regional workshops – all with the aim of encouraging the production of materials closely related to the needs and interests of adult literacy students. The book, which in many respects arises from those workshops, was compiled by the Teaching Materials Group of ALRA's Advisory Panel and aims to develop an approach to the teaching of functional literacy. In essence this third edition published by the Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit remains the same as the original although retitled 'Working Together – An Approach to Functional Literacy'. Unfortunately we have also had to increase its price to reflect 1987 costs.

Alan Wells, Director
Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit

Chapter 1 Looking at how we Read and Write

The purpose of this book is to help you, with examples, to look afresh at the variety of reading tasks in the adult world, and to see what use you can make of them with your student.

It is a book to write in, to record your own responses. In addition, we hope you will get together with other people in your scheme to examine the issues raised, and talk about them.

It is NOT the object of this book to suggest that tutors abandon any previous teaching strategies concerned with teaching the relationship between the sounds and the letters (with a poor reader), or spelling skills (with a poor speller). The object is to put these skills into a more relevant setting, and to use activities and words students need, rather than words from children's reading books, and children's spelling lists.

Most tutors, teachers and organizers are dissatisfied with the use of school children's books because:

1. In the adult world we DO things with reading and writing. You cannot DO much with children's books except sit and read them.
2. Ploughing through children's reading books tends actually to be slower because it takes longer to get to the words and phrases an adult might urgently need to learn to read and write.

We are concerned to propose a kind of "double-decker" approach to literacy:

Firstly helping students to define their needs and interests, focussing in a very specific way on a particular task; and then taking the student through all the things a good reader and writer would do.

Secondly, selecting from specific tasks those reading and writing skills that could be used in relation to a student's ability.

In performing a specific task, two things should come to light:

- An awareness of the **actual skills** involved in performing that task, and
- A consideration of **how** to make your student aware that those skills are needed.

In Chapter 3 there are some specific examples, like looking up a telephone number, which demonstrate this process.

Can we emphasise at the outset that we believe busy tutors should not feel they have to spend hours preparing materials before a lesson. From your point of view, as well as your student's, it is far better to do the preparation with your student – talking him or her through the process will help towards a much greater understanding about reading and writing in the adult world than being presented with a finished job. This will become clearer as we look at the examples.

In Chapter 1a, you will be asked to look again at all the reading and writing tasks we can do as adults. Most of the things we do have long since been so familiar that we are hardly conscious of them. Therefore, we are asking you to work through the questions that follow before going on to Chapter 1b.

Here we are going to suggest some of the issues we think emerge from 1a. It will not be cut-and-dried: reading and writing in adult life can never be like that.

Chapter 2 overviews the need to choose relevant tasks and discusses what we call the "message" and the "medium" aspects of literacy. We list a selection of tasks and this is followed by a suggested list of literacy skills. We must stress the word "suggested" – such a list must be incomplete and we hope you will add areas and details that you feel you need. Finally we suggest five sets of questions to help you relate these skills to the needs of students.

Chapter 3 contains four separate and detailed examples of adult reading and writing tasks, with activities relating these to the structures suggested in Chapter 2.

In Chapter 4, we ask you to work through one of the tasks with other tutors. You might want to use the examples with your student, but you will need to adapt them. Our real aim is to help you use this kind of analysis in planning the work with your student.

Students exist in the real world and come with real needs, and these should form the basis for the tasks you might explore. Only within this context are the separate reading and writing skills made relevant.

In Chapter 4, we try to suggest ways in which teachers in groups might use the ideas in this book. They have organisational problems which one-to-one tutors do not have, but there could be some very interesting work arising from groups of students sharing their experiences around a commonly chosen task.

Chapter 4 concludes with a section addressed to organizers, and asks them to consider the training and resource needs of this kind of approach.

Chapter 1a What do we read and write? Why? How?

For a few pages we are going to ask you to look in depth at what the good reader and writer is doing in everyday adult life.

We are going to ask you to think about your own recent reading and writing and make some notes. (Use this book as a workbook if you wish.)

Before you start, we suggest you might give the whole section a quick read through. Before you do anything, you might want to consider spending a few days observing your own reading and writing. It's up to you.

The space provided is for you to write your answers. We shall understand if you do not want to complete them immediately. But as you read on, we hope you will come to see why we ask you to do so.

QUESTION ONE
What specific reading and writing tasks have you had to undertake in the last few days?

SITUATION	READING	WRITING
At work		
Travelling		

QUESTION ONE (cont)	SITUATION	READING	WRITING
	Shopping		
	Newspapers		
	Magazines & Books		
	Jobs at Home		
	Postal		
	Financial		

QUESTION ONE (cont)

SITUATION READING WRITING

Forms

Recreation & Hobbies

Other Areas Important to You

QUESTION TWO
Now will you record which of the following situations you have met in the course of the reading and writing tasks you have chosen to examine:

a) Have you met any words you could not pronounce? What were they? What did you do?

b) Have you met words whose meaning was unfamiliar to you were they new words, or familiar words used in a new way? What were they? What did you do?

QUESTION TWO (cont)

c) Have you met sentences of such length and complexity that you had to re-read them to get the meaning?

d) Have you met passages where you had to "read between the lines" to infer what the author was trying not to say too explicitly?

e) Have you met passages where you felt you were in disagreement with the author's point of view?

f) Have you met passages that involved you emotionally – humour, sadness, etc.?

g) Have you met texts in connection with some job you needed to do? Have they always been adequate in terms of instruction? What had you done if this has not been the case?

QUESTION TWO (cont)

h) Have you used texts where you needed to skip large chunks of material in order to find the piece of information you needed? How do you decide when to start reading in depth again?

j) Finding texts is a problem: e.g. getting hold of a claim form, or finding a suitable car manual. Have you had trouble finding a text you needed? What steps did you take?

k) Have you had problems with "small print"? In what situation? What did you do about it?

l) Have you, to your knowledge, made any spelling mistakes? How did you realise? What did you do about it?

m) Have you had to make any preliminary drafts of written material before writing or typing a fair copy? In what situation, and why?

QUESTION TWO (cont)

n) Have you had to write using highly formal "officialese"? What difficulty did this present?

p) Have you had difficulty finding the required information before you undertook any writing, e.g. filling in a tax form, writing a report. What did you do about it?

r) Are there writing activities that you put off as long as possible? Can you analyze the reason for this?

s) Normally teaching reading and writing to adults concentrates heavily on the areas suggested in Questions a), b), and l).

How do you think you came to be able to understand all the other kinds of skills we have highlighted?

Chapter 1b Summary of Questions One and Two

Reading and writing, as we said earlier, is a "double decker" activity. Firstly, there is the "what we do it for" – the reasons for reading and writing. For shorthand purposes we will call this the "**messages**" aspect of literacy.

Secondly, there is the problem of how we send and receive those messages – the squiggles we read and write. We will call this the "**medium**" aspect of literacy.

When people speak to us, we try and pay attention to the message – the meaning. Unless we are listening to a very unfamiliar accent, dialect, or a foreigner with very halting English, we rarely pay a great deal of attention the the "**medium**" aspect of speech – that is the sounds made by the voice.

As with speech, so with literacy. Good readers and writers pay attention to the message. The medium only becomes a problem if the words get too difficult, the text too complicated, the spelling and writing too poor, and so on.

The problem is this: we read and write for reasons. Students coming for help may or may not be very clear what their reasons are for wanting to read and write. Our **first** job, and it is a continuing one, is to help students to a greater awareness of the uses of reading and writing **for them.**

Only if we keep this in front of us can we really expect students to see reading and writing as a matter of "**message**" as well as "**medium**". Look back at your replies to the questions please.

Question One concerns itself with what we read, and is designed to help you realise in just how many different ways we use literacy. This realisation will, we hope, help your student to a similar realisation.

Question Two suggests that reading is not a passive activity – we get involved. If we want students to get involved, the texts we use should pay attention to that fact. The same applies to writing and spelling. The questions also show that we all meet difficulties.

Our literacy breaks down from time to time, and it is essential that students be aware of this. Obviously, it follows that they should be helped to a greater understanding of the skills we use when this happens. This is why we have continually asked you

what you do when things go wrong; we not only have to help students learn to read and spell, we have to help them to develop strategies to cope. No one ever gets to be "**absolutely literate**" – the idea is ridiculous. We hope Question Two r) finally establishes this message!

Can we now ask you to explore the relationship between "**message**" and "**medium**" in a bit more detail? We emphasize this because, if you are unclear about their relationship, we cannot expect you to help your student to be clear about it!

QUESTION THREE

a) What do you need, to be sure how these words are pronounced:

abuse bow close conduct invalid lead object permit read record subject wind wound

b) What do you need, to be sure of the meanings of these words:

bank branch drill head post sign spell tank

c) Imagine someone speaking each of these words in isolation. How would they change the meaning? How many meanings can you think of?

fire go John no out

d) Try the same thing that you tried in c), but this time see how many meanings you can extract from each of these sentences:

They are eating apples.

The radio works.

M.P.s are revolting.

e) Try and fill in the words you think are missing in the following passages. In each case there is *one* word missing, and the dots provide no clues as to its length.

QUESTION THREE (cont)

i) The income ..... below gives .....good idea .....the sort .....income level ..... which you .....qualify for ..... prescriptions if ..... are in .....-time work. ..... examples are ..... general guide.....and can ..... affected by ..... rent, rates, ... expenses connected ..... work. If ..... rent and ....., etc. are ..... or lower ..... those shown ..... the amount ..... can earn ..... still qualify ..... also be ..... or lower. ..... you are ..... working the ..... levels are ..... and you .....look at ..... full explanation ..... the following .....

(Free Prescription Leaflet No. 1975)

QUESTION THREE (cont)

ii) The wrong combination of radial .....cross-ply tyres on a .....can be dangerous. Therefore, ...following information is vital:

1. Do ....., in any circumstances, have radial- ..... tyres on the front with ..... -ply on the rear. There ..... no exceptions to this; it .....whether the car has front ..... rear wheel drive, or whether .....rear tyres are standard tread .....-ply or winter tread cross- ..... . Remember 'Radials to the rear'.

2. ..... not mix cross-ply and .....-ply tyres on the same ..... . If fitting the spare results ..... mixing drive with extra care ..... at low speeds and correct ..... fitment as soon as possible. ..... should be noted however that ..... mixing might contravene the law.

(Car Tyres and Your Safety)

QUESTION THREE (cont)

iii) Andesites and trachytes, the Intermediate lavas, ...

more the character of rhyolite than .....basalt in hand

specimen. They contain ..... or no free quartz, but if

..... enough, feldspar phenocrysts will be visible.

..... the trachytes the feldspar is dominantly .....

in the andesites one of the ..... series. In such fine-

grained rocks, ... a hand lens may not give .....

great deal of information and for ..... indentification,

examination of a thin-section ..... a petrological microscope may be necessary.

(Minerals & Rocks, Kirkaldy, Blandford, p. 152)

To start reading with books that choose a small number of words and repeat them many times is so divorced from real adult reading that it can actually hinder good fluent reading from ever developing.

The aim of Question Three has been to "sell" you this idea. Let's take it step-by-step. In Question Three a) you were offered words whose pronunciation is altered according to meaning e.g.:

CLOSE PIT VOTE LIKELY ON PAY DEAL

CLOSE PIT OR WE STRIKE

Message: there is an important sense in which you have to be able to "guess" the *meaning* of a word before you can effectively decide how it is pronounced. Only the surrounding words can help you do this – even a dictionary will only point out the alternatives.

Question Three b). Look up any common word in the dictionary and you are likely to find quite ordinary words can carry many possible meanings. Again, without the surrounding words in the text you cannot be sure of the actual meaning in that situation.

Message: If we are concerned with "message" as well as "medium" we won't teach words in isolation.

Question Three c). The way you hear the word "fire" is dramatically different according to whether or not:

- the building is going up in flames,
- the soldiers are opening up with their rifles,
- you are looking at a fire in a shop.

Question Three d) picks up this point and takes it further: according to the intended meaning we accent some words, almost ignore others:

- were there people eating apples, or
- were the apples for eating, and not cooking;

Only the way this sentence is spoken or read will give the precise meaning.

Message: Readers who read word-by-word, giving each word equal value, are less likely to get the "message" and more likely to stick with the "medium". We call this "barking at print".

Question Three e) is the crunch: it picks up some of the messages from Questions One and Two as well as all the previous points in Three.

Now please answer the following questions

1. Which of these three passages did you find easiest to tackle?

   Why?

2. Which did you find the most difficult?

   Why?

3. How often did you read further on before you went back and filled a gap?

4. How often was the writer's use of language not what you expected?

   Did this cause you problems? What did you do about it?

5. How often did the phrases used actually help you guess a word more or less without thinking?

Message: You are more likely to stick with a passage that interests you, rather than one that does not.

You do not read word-by-word – you come to a text expecting it to be about certain things, you have questions already in your mind. You glance it over, look at the headings and other clues, and get a general impression of what it is going to be about before you actually get down to read it in depth. (You may, conversely, have decided it's not for you!)

In sum: you bring your background knowledge and interest to the task; you expect to get messages from it.

What has all this to say to tutors? Quite simply this:

a) Start with a student's needs and interests. He/she will be much more likely to stick with it – just like you.

b) Doing this means using words and phrases your student is likely to know and understand. Other things being equal, they are easier to learn to read. (Would you fancy learning to read with a geology text? Look at the message from your student's point of view.)

c) We should offer students as close as possible a replica of real adult reading. This means, additionally to point a) and b):

- a full discussion of the subject matter, its issues and problems, in which it is critical that your student feels your equal.
- tutor and student should, for preference, choose and formulate a text together. At this stage a student will have been "soaked" in the issues and vocabulary and will have that much better an opportunity of cracking the "**medium**".

If necessary, tutors should read or record the agreed text for the student to hear how a good reader reads.

(Only at this stage should the student be encouraged to have a go, and he should receive ALL the support he needs whilst doing so).

We can only develop the reading, writing and spelling activities contained in the text after completing the processes listed above.

Words which could fill the spaces in Question Three e).

i) guide a of of at may free you full The a only be your and with your rates higher than then you and will higher If not income lower should the on pages

ii) and car the not ply cross are applies or the cross ply Do radial axle in and the It such

iii) have of little porphyritic In orthoclase plagioclase even a complete under

Chapter 2 Using Adult Reading and Writing Tasks

Overview and Objectives

In the sections that follow this outline we offer a range of tasks, a suggestion as to the kind of skills we use from time to time, and some examples which show the sequences in which those skills are used.

Our central aim in this whole section is to help you and your student choose a relevant task, and to extract from it both discussion and follow-up work on the reading and writing skills.

We saw, in working through Chapter 1, what a varied range of tasks we meet in adult reading and writing, and what a range of problems we can come up against. The reason for dwelling on this in such depth is because we very often have naive views about how we learned to read and write.

For example, it is quite a common view that if you taught the names of the twenty six letters of the alphabet to someone who couldn't read, then they would be well on the way. Anyone who has actually worked with a new reader knows that is nonsense!

The interesting thing is that a lot of parents with very young children think that they taught their children to read by this method long before they went to school. You see how often we confuse "medium" with "message" when you look at this situation again. What actually happens is that parents have done lots of other things which convey the "message", and have got their children so interested in reading that the process got started without any conscious effort.

The children understood that the squiggles on the page were signalling a message: stories, poems, information, and so on. Then they found the world full of such messages, all of which were patiently explained to them. (The lucky ones, that is.) In short, they learned the purpose of print.

The argument in this book is that we have to do the same thing for adults: we should be showing them the range of opportunities the printed word opens up, and its links with their own background knowledge and life experiences.

At the same time, we should be extracting the words students need to learn to read, and using relevant techniques for teaching the relationship between spoken language and print. As implied at

the end of Chapter 1, this is far more than just teaching the relationship between the sounds we speak and the letters we use to write those sounds on paper.

We hope that if anything emerged from Chapter 1 it was this: when we read we are searching for the meaning, or the message. We expect the printed word to be relevant, useful or entertaining. If it is not, we are quickly bored and irritated with the whole matter.

The trouble is that, so often, beginning reading is about anything but getting use or entertainment from the print. We too often take the view that all the drudgery must come first – learning the hundreds of combinations of letters and sounds, endlessly blending them together to get words, and the words themselves are often of very little significance. We don't suggest for one minute that these skills are anything other than essential, but we do remind readers where we arrived at the end of Chapter 1: the skills are only relevant when a context has been created for them.

The same points apply with equal force to writing and spelling. What is the relevance of learning long lists of words, or a succession of rules and exceptions, without any insight into their use? We offer you a simple slogan:

YOU LEARN A SKILL BY USING IT!

Tasks and Skills

In this section, we give a suggested list of possible tasks an adult might need, or want to undertake. It is incomplete – no list could ever be otherwise – and so we are leaving space for you to add the ones you think of.

applying to join a club/association
backing a horse
choosing and booking a holiday
claiming FIS and other benefits
filling in HP form
filling in Income Tax form
filling in job application form
filling in pools coupon
looking up street in A – Z
looking up telephone number
looking up train time
looking up word in a dictionary
note-taking
reading an advertisement

reading book/film review
reading do-it-yourself instructional material
reading a letter from Social Security or other agency
reading newspaper leader
reading news report
reading novel, short story, poem, etc.
reading review of sports event
reading safety regulations
reading street or road signs
reading text for course of study
replying to job advertisement
sending for an item advertised in newspaper/magazine
sending for item in mail-order catalogue
shopping
using Post Office Savings, or other bank/financial body
writing letter to child's teacher/head teacher
writing letter to friend
writing to Social Security/other agency
voting

Now please add
your own, and
your student's tasks:

Literacy Skills

Here is a suggested list of the literacy skills used when undertaking any of the tasks shown above. We give these suggested headings in alphabetical order, bearing in mind that, in any particular task the order in which they are used will vary. Not all the skills will be used in every case.

You may find it helpful to make this list into a set of cards.

Context
- Words vary in meaning
- Expression alters meaning
- Sequence builds expectation of words to come.

Find the main ideas in the text	– Get the facts: what is fact, what is opinion? – Evaluate information in the light of your background knowledge: do you need another text?
Follow instructions	– Awareness of contents, order, and layout of text. – Awareness of information requried. – Using clues that help you thumb a text for specific information. Skip "padding". – Infer steps and details which are unclear or unstated. – Re-sequence steps for your own purpose.
Reactions to text	– What is your immediate reaction to the text? – Can you relate it to your feelings, and previous experiences in this area? – Has it altered your outlook on the subject? – What other information do you now want? – Do you want to take further action?
Recording and Communicating for Others	– Awareness of needs of recipient – Awareness of layout and format required – Awareness of style and importance of clarity – Handwriting requirements – Spelling (see "Spelling" overleaf)

Recording and Communicating for self	– Noting information for next steps in use. – Appropriate storage of information according to future requirement.
Selecting the task	– What is your reason for selecting the task? – What do you want from it? – What are you going to do with it?
Source of texts	– Awareness of places, organisations and people as reference points for locating texts.
Spelling	– Awareness of ways of solving a a spelling problem: – Try out several variations; – Does it look or feel right? – Try the possible ways of spelling given sounds in context. – Draw on knowledge of prefixes, suffixes, and syllables. – Use of the dictionary and other sources of information.
Understand links between speech and print	– Left to right. Top to bottom – Sentences made up of words – Words made up of sounds – Sounds represented by letters. – Expression alters meaning
Word recognition	– Context – Dictionary – Phonic – Structural – roots, prefixes, suffixes.

The next stage is to marry the skills to the task; the framework below is intended to help you to do this in a workable sequence.

Essential preliminary questions regarding the skills of the good reader.	*Developing these skills with students*
1. What is the task? What is the purpose for wanting to undertake the task?	What is a student's specific purpose? What practical need must be dealt with immediately? What general scheme can emerge from helping with that need?
2. Where is the relevant information to be found? Is there more than one text?	How can you help a student to be aware of this process of finding a text? Can he/she share in the search in some meaningful way?
3. Is the text suitable for the task? How is that suitability decided?	How can your student help decide on such suitability?
What information is required? What problems, issues, and discussion points need to be sorted?	How far are these issues, and the consequent discussion, led by your student?
4. What reading skills does the good reader use for this task?	How can your student be made aware of these skills? What follow-up usage can your student make: – of the actual passage, – of a simplified passage, – of his own dictated response, – of the key vocabulary.

Essential preliminary questions regarding the skills of the good reader.	*Developing these skills with students*
5. What writing skills does the good writer use for this task?	How can your student be made aware of the written requirements? What follow-up usage can your student make of the various writing skills the task requires?

Chapter 3 The application of Literacy Skills

Example 1 Using a student's writing

Student Profile

The student is a woman, married. She has two sons aged 5 and 7 years. She is interested in the idea of fostering a child.

She is not working at the moment, but has considerable experience in working as an auxiliary nurse in a children's hospital.

Her husband is working for the Water Board, regular hours (9 a.m. to 5.30 p.m.). He is very supportive in his attitude to her literacy tuition, and also interested in fostering a child. The student's interests are nursing and children. She wanted to take a Pre-school Playgroups Leader's course but didn't feel confident enough of her literacy skills.

Student Writing Used: "My Life Story" June Dixon, p. 42 of 'Father's Cap.'
Read with the student.

Possible Activities

1. Talking about the piece. Points that could be raised for discussion are:
   a) Large families and poverty/low pay;
   b) Council housing and rents;
   c) Children in care and children's homes;
   d) The education of children in care;
   e) Separating children from the same family – possible reasons, and the possible effects.
2. a) Finding out what a present-day children's home is like (orally and through reading).
   b) Visiting a home.
3. Investigating the law relating to the taking and keeping of children in care.
4. Finding out about fostering a child.
5. Finding out what a Children's Spokesperson is and does.

6. Keeping a dated scrap-book of articles from newspapers and magazines about children in care. They may be used as case-studies and examples of how the law operates.
7. Collecting and collating photos, taped extracts, transcripts and dictated memories of the student's own childhood to form a personal life story.
8. Using the same approach to record the life and highlights of the student's children.
9. Talking about differences and implications of long or short-term fostering.

Activity selected by Student and Tutor

Finding out about fostering a child.

Literacy Skills

Source of Text:

Telephone or letter.

i) Fostering Officer of the LEA.
ii) National Foster-Care Association.
iii) Parent to Parent Information on Adoption Services.
iv) Adoption Resource Exchange.
v) Dr. Barnardo's.

Selecting the task:

Task selected because of interest in fostering and children. Information obtained from it might be put to practical use later on.

Source of text:

All the agencies mentioned have some sort of written information about fostering. Some determined effort may be necessary to obtain detailed information on process of fostering.

It may be done by an initial meeting with a representative of the agency concerned.

Find the main ideas in the texts (or conversations)

e.g.

1. What legal processes and formalities are necessary?
2. Can the prospective parent choose the child?
3. Can the prospective child reject the parent?
4. How long will the process take once a 'matching' is agreed?
5. What are the criteria for selection of suitable foster-parents?
6. Is there any money involved? Who pays whom and for what?
7. Is there a form to fill in?
8. What happens if one 'party' is unhappy after a while?
9. What checks are made on the progress of the new 'family'?
10. Are there any children currently available for fostering?
11. How long is the period of fostering?
12. Can a foster-child be adopted?
13. What information does the foster parent have about the natural parents?
14. What information does the foster child have about the natural parents?
15. What are the sorts of reactions of children to the idea of fostering?

Reactions to the Text

1. Are you intimidated by the length of the proceedings?
2. Are you intimidated by the formality of the proceedings?
3. Should this deter you?
4. Are your reservations irrational or based on previous *relevant* experience?
5. How can you accurately assess your reactions – talk to others?

Selecting the task and finding the main ideas

1. Talking to others may take the form of a visit to a children's home. Usually 4-6 visits are made before a 'potential child' is selected.
2. The student may decide to look at pieces of writing or descriptions by children of their experiences in care.
3. The student may decide to look at some professional texts by Social Scientists/Social Workers, Psychologists, etc. on the question.
4. Evaluation of the information read may be related to the children visited in the home, and may be discussed with tutor and/or spouse and other relatives.

Recording and Communicating for Self

1. Working out what kind of child the student and spouse are prepared to foster – colour, age, handicapped, physically/mentally, emotionally disturbed, etc.

2. Deciding how much contact with natural parents and other relations you, the foster-parent, will accept.
3. Talking to people at the home about the child.
4. Writing or taping a free piece (stream of consciousness) to try and assess honestly attitudes and feelings to child.
5. Talking to child. Taking child out for an afternoon.
6. Making notes of money to be paid by agency for fostering. Making notes on the legal arrangements that will obtain – checking these.
7. Working out household finances and trying to estimate how this will change when an extra member joins the household.
8. Pencilling in of form to be filled in (if any).

Example 2 Using the Yellow Pages

Student Profile

John is 34 years old. He is married with two children. He is a carpenter. He missed a lot of schooling through ill-health and received no extra help in the secondary school. He has taught himself to read and buys The Sun every morning. He can read and understand most of the articles. He has no knowledge of the sounds of the letters. He came to the Literacy Scheme wanting help with writing and spelling. He can write his name and address and some sight words that he is familiar with, but when it comes to building words from their sounds, he is stuck.

He has been working on his writing and spelling for about three months. He has done a lot of work on single letter sounds and is able to build regular three and four letter words quite easily. At the moment he is working on the silent 'e'.

At the last lesson he asked his tutor to help him find a TV repair man as the television had broken. Normally he would ask his wife, but she had gone to visit her mother who is ill. John and his tutor talked about where they might find a TV repair man and, as neither knew of one personally, decided to use the Yellow Pages. They went through it together and noted two or three names, addresses and telephone numbers of local TV repair shops. John took this information away to use the next day. He hoped to get the television mended as soon as possible so that he would not miss too much of the Olympic Games being shown then.

Alphabet Order

To use the telephone directory, atlas, dictionary or many other reference books, it is useful to have an awareness of alphabetical order. To begin with the alphabet written out on a piece of card can be used as a reference point. After a time the student will want to be independent of the written reference card. He will want to feel that he is able to use an alphabetical list anywhere and at any time without relying on a person or card to support him.

For this reason we need to prepare some activities that will help the student reach his goal. At the beginning the student will want to refer to the written alphabet order all the time, but with a wide variety of activities based on awareness of alphabet order he will turn to this less and less.

1. Ensure the student knows the names of all the letters of the alphabet. The order is not important but he needs to be able to recognise and name each letter.
2. Using the master alphabet card, ask your student to find the letter that comes after/before a certain letter. In the same way you could ask your student which letter comes between two letters e.g. a and c. You could then have a series of these clues and the resulting letters can spell a word your student knows. He can then check whether he has chosen the correct letters.
3. The next step is to ask your student to put two or three letters in the order they appear in the alphabet.
4. A game of rummy can be devised using letters of the alphabet. Use thirteen consecutive letters of the alphabet and have four cards of each letter. In this way you have a pack of 52 cards. Runs of three or more consecutive letters can be placed on the table as well as three or more of a kind. You can adjust the number of cards in the pack and the rules of the game to suit yourselves.

   Once your student has become fairly familiar with the sequence of the letters of the alphabet, he is going to be able to find his way around any alphabetical list. John is at this stage and it was not until he began to look up certain words that a problem arose. Once he had found the group of words starting with the specific letter he had to look through the whole group of words listed as he was not aware that the complete sequence of the letters in the word control that word's place in the alphabetical list.

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Selecting the task	What is your reason for selecting the task?	The TV has broken down and an engineer is needed to mend it
	What do you want from it?	Telephone number of TV engineer
	What are you going to do with it?	Ring for the engineer
Source of texts	Awareness of places, organisations and people as reference points for locating texts	Yellow pages – at home if there is a phone, in telephone box, at Post Office, at library.
Understands links between speech and print	Left to right	
	Top to bottom	
	Words made up of sounds	
	Sounds represented by letters	
	Expression alters meaning	
Word recognition	Context	
	Dictionary	
	Phonic	
	Structural – roots, prefixes, suffixes	
	Awareness of content, order, and lay-out of text.	Alphabetical order of subject headings and by name under subject headings.
	Awareness of information needed.	Telephone number of local TV Engineer.
	Using clues that help you thumb a text for specific information. Skip "padding".	Guide words at top of page – address giving locality.

	Infer steps and details which are unclear or unstated. Re-sequence steps for your own purpose.	Alternative headings listed below. Use of address/telephone code to determine locality.
Recording and communicating to self	Noting information for next steps in use	Writing down name, address and phone number – checking – is it a good idea to make a note of two or three possibilities?
	Appropriate storage of information according to future requirement	Entering in address book, telephone book, on card attached to TV – if service is satisfactory

As you will have noticed only certain of the skills can be utilised in this example. This is because a telephone directory is restricted in its use as a source of factual information.

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Here are some activiites to help your student understand this principle:

1. Take two or three pairs of letters where the first letter is the same in each pair e.g. st, sh, sp. Talk with your student about these groups of letters. How are we going to put these into alphabetical order? By looking at the second letter. Work on this concept until your student is happy with it.
2. This can be extended to groups of three letters in the same way.

Groups of three or four words can now be put in the order that they will be found in the dictionary. It would be best to use a clearly set out dictionary where the words are set apart from the meanings. Do ensure the words you are using with your student are in the dictionary.

1. Work on short words beginning with different letters. Your student can write the words in the order he expects to find them in the dictionary and can then check them himself in the dictionary.
2. The same can then be done with words beginning with the same letter.

Help your student to become aware of useful shortcuts in looking up words. You can practise opening the dictionary as near as possible to a given letter. Most reference books list the first or the first and last words on that page in heavy lettering at the top of the page. Once your student is familiar with the alphabet order he will find this a helpful guide in finding a specific word. For reference books with small print it may be helpful to use a magnifying glass.

Related follow up activities

1. Abbreviations – common short forms used in the telephone directory.
2. When looking up a telephone number you usually need to know the initial of the Christian name – this could lead on to some work on short forms of Christian names e.g. Bill for William, Betty for Elizabeth.
3. When using the Yellow Pages it is useful to have knowledge of the local area – in a large town the A-Z; in smaller towns the local road map can be used.

4. It could be useful to do some work on alternative descriptions for trade and business concerns. This will help the student in using the Yellow pages.
5. Use of other alphabetical reference books, indexes and directories.
6. Having looked up one telephone number that may be needed in the future, it may be a good idea to begin a personal address and telephone book.
7. Work on matching given information with information in the directory before noting further details. This could involve matching handwriting, typescript and/or large and small print.
8. Discuss alternative ways of finding required information if it does not appear in the reference book under a certain heading.
9. Using a telephone dialling code book.
10. In some telephone directories a fair amount of information is given regarding other telephone services. If the student has a telephone he might find this useful.
11. Paying the telephone bill can develop into work on paying bills in general – by cash, by cheque, by postal order, by giro – sending the money by post, paying over the counter – the costs involved in making a local/long distance telephone call at different times during the day.
12. Variety of approach to telephone calls – business, friend, fact-finding – use a tape recorder to act out different telephone conversations and then write out the script for the student.
13. For a business call, does the telephone conversation need to be followed up with a letter?
14. Look at the costs of renting a telephone against the costs of using the public telephone.

Telephone Directory Sample

Rowe A.A, 49 The Close . . . . . Reigate 84672
Rowe A.B, 24 Thornton Rd, Purley 01-660 1749
Rowe A.E, 22 Southend La. SE26 . . . . . 01-659 2274
Rowe A.F, 12 Byron Av,
S. Croydon . . . 01-657 9447
Rowe A.J, 15 Cleves Cres, Croydon 01-681 7752
Rowe Arthr.L, 47 Newlands Rse . . . Caterham 45573
Rowe, A.O, 12 Leonard Rd, SW16 . . . . . 01-769 4701
Rowell W.C, 8 Gipsy Hl, SE19 . . . . . 01-670 4883
Rowen E.L, 14 Keats Wy, Croydon 01-656 0720
Rowett R.M, 7 Cargreen Rd, SE25 . . . 01-653 8853
Rowe-Williamson F,
153 Garlands Rd . . . Redhill 66433
Rowin Ltd, Plmbrs,
2 Silverdale SE26 . . . 01-650 1171
Rowlan B, 174 Crescent Rd, SE25 . . . . . 01-654 5708

Example 3 Looking at shopping

In this section we will examine a shopping task and discuss the main elements in structuring materials to help the student gain confidence and competence in shopping and in developing related literacy skills. A group of literacy workers at a recent ALRA conference on teaching materials were given the following case study:–

Student profile

> "Marjorie is a 38 year old married woman with two sons, aged 8 and 10, both of whom are literate. 12 years ago Marjorie was completely illiterate but as a result of tuition at that time she learned the letters of the alphabet – but not their sounds – and has retained this knowledge. Marjorie's early history indicates that she missed school quite a lot through ill health and 'helping her mother' – of whose literacy level she is uncertain – with domestic tasks. Her father and two brothers are literate. Marjorie's present background and family status is unhappy. Her husband is self-employed and appears to have cut her off completely from any independent contact with society. Apart from visits to the supermarket with him she never goes out and has no friends. She is physically assaulted by her husband, often for wrongly identifying foodstuffs and other purchases in the supermarket. He does not allow her to buy anything from catalogues even though this is the only means available to her of purchasing anything on her own. As a result of the verbal and physical abuse to which she is subjected Marjorie is in a highly nervous state. She is deaf in one ear and wears a hearing aid in conversation. She desperately wants to learn to shop competently."

The group saw that success in shopping was a matter of survival for Marjorie – an urgent need. They made the following observations:–

1. The teaching strategy would have to include both short term and long term aims. To begin with the emphasis would be on sight words and elementary writing skills. The longer term aim would be to develop Marjorie's reading and writing.
2. Marjorie's knowledge of the alphabet should be used as the basis for developing word-building skills and her hearing

problems would have to be remembered in planning work with her.

The group discussed the shopping task and explored the range of skills necessary to complete it satisfactorily:–

Selecting the task:	**To shop**	
Deciding:	What to buy – Groceries? – Other consumables? – Hardware? – Other durables etc.	Oral list
Deciding:	Where to shop – The super-market? – The shop in the high street? – The corner store? – Newsagents etc.	Sight words Local knowledge
Looking:	Finding the items, e.g., Dairy products, meats, canned foods etc., bread, cereals, vegetables or other items.	Sight words Word recognition
Selecting:	Choosing the items, e.g., which brand? What sort of cheese? Bacon? Washing powder, shoe polish, newspaper, comic, etc.	Word recognition Experience of shopping
Deciding:	What the household needs – who likes what – how much is needed for each person.	Discuss – Knowledge of household wants
Selecting:	The right quality, weight and price for each item.	Numeracy – Handling money.

Further consideration of the task led to the following conversation.

"Majorie bought the wrong brand of cheese, her husband waited for her by the barrier until she had paid for it, then abused her in public for her stupidity."

"What sort of cheese did he tell her to get?"

"Oh, I don't know, she went by the colour or something like that, anyway it was wrong."

"If she can mistake cheeses she can mistake other foods too."

"She does."
"Butter and Margarine?"

"Plum jam and damson jam?"

"Apples and Oranges?"

"Er. not quite."

"Bramleys and Granny Smiths I mean, Sevilles, Jaffas and Tangerines."

"There's fish too, Cod, Rock, Haddock, Plaice."

"And Tripe! Black, Honeycomb, and Seam."

The possibilities began to emerge as the group thought about how they would cope with their own shopping tasks if they were unable, like Marjorie, to read the messages. They began to evaluate their own knowledge and experiences of substitutes at the margin of preference, – prices and quality, product differentiation, value, special offers, discounts and stamps.

"Is Marjorie numerate, can she add up?"

"No"

"Can she write at all?"

"Only her name."

"Right, where do we start?"

"By discussing with her how we can help, by telling her about the things we will do together?"

"We can tell her what she will be able to do for herself once she is able to read and write."

"We can say what we find difficult in shopping and we can go to

the super-market with her, during the day when they're not very busy, and point things out with her."

"O.K. but more specifically, what are the shopping skills literacy will give her?"

"The ability to discriminate between different commodities and make purchases selectively and economically."

"She would be able to handle instructions on convenience foods, to compare prices and quantities and spot bargains."

"She would be able to deal with household instructions and follow recipes and read articles about shopping."

"Being able to read the messages on packets and goods would give her independence in the shopping task – she wouldn't need to ask."

The group then went on to discuss a preliminary list of basic skills Marjorie would need to acquire:–

1. Purpose related sight words.
2. Simple sentences including common household names, brands etc.
3. Word matching with objects.
4. Purpose related reading of simplified texts.

The model which finally emerged from the discussion looked something like this:–

Literacy Skills

Selecting the task: A Shopping List which will help in selecting the right shopping items by comparing the words on the list with the items in the shop.

Source of texts: Marjorie's oral list of her shopping requirements written down. Labels on cartons, packets etc. Adverts on display and on television, cut price lists, and shopping newspapers.

Understanding the links between speech and print: Marjorie's oral list written down. Saying the words. Reading the information on packets, jars, wrapped foods etc, writing down brand names, looking at brand names, saying them and seeing how they are printed on packets.

Finding the main ideas:

Using the shopping list to decide what brand you want to buy. Finding out about the weight, quality and price. Finding out about the differences and similarities and the uses of products.

Word recognition:

Using shopping list and shopping words in context. Making a word bank of foods and their substitutes, e.g. butter and margarine cauliflower and cabbage, their complements, e.g. bread and butter, bacon and eggs etc, and their differences, e.g. Cheddar cheese, Stilton etc., Looking at cartons, packets, labels etc – at how the words are made up from letters, how they sound and what they mean.

Following instructions:

Finding out what is printed on the packet and how to use the information. Looking at the different ways a commodity can be used – e.g. potatoes, boiled, mashed, chipped, fried, roasted etc. Looking at and following the instructions – using a recipe – finding out about sequences – what to do first etc.

Recording and communicating for self:

Making a shopping list of weekly grocery and other household requirements – a master list. Compiling a scrapbook of labels from cans, packets etc. Making notes about prices – weights – the names of things individual members of the family like to eat. Thinking about, talking about and writing down things you want to buy next time. Noting whether you like or dislike some of the things you have bought. Are they good value for money? What else is there you could use instead? What does it look like, how does it taste etc. Discussing with others.

"Have we got everything?"

"Shopping list based upon Marjorie's weekly grocery requirements – lower and upper case."

"Labels from tins and cartons, cut out pictures and word matching flash cards."

"Word to word matching cards."

"I Spy game with products – using her knowledge of the alphabet."

"Snap cards, Bingo cards, Pairs game – Pelmanism."

"Cut price list from shopping magazines."

"Pelican Zebra cookbook."

"Metric Weight conversion chart."

"Prices/Products list to check price per pound of cheese or pre-packed meats etc."

"Crossword grids and cards with letters – cards with names."

"Kit for Marjorie to make up – a short shopping list with prices."

"Kit using the short shopping list as a basis for word bingo."

"Empty jars, packets, bags, for her to match labels."

"Comparison chart with basic commodities and spaces for brands and sorts – e.g. Cheese: cheddar, stilton, apples: Bramleys, golden delicious, etc."

"WE COULD DO WITH HAVING A CHAT WITH MARJORIE!"

Any group of tutors working together in this way will realise the need to involve the student in such work.

The shopping task offers tremendous potential for literacy work. It is both exciting and easily accessible. Sight words colourfully displayed, object/word relationships, price and quality, use, values, labels, numbers, pictorials, alternatives, special offers, bargains, instructions etc., etc. The group explored some of the possibilities – variants of well known games such as snap, scrabble, lexicon, bingo, I spy, crosswords, guessing games and other learning methods linked to the shop. Of crucial and dominating importance to the group's approach was the fact that the main staples of the shopping basket could be differentiated . . .

CHEESE –	Lancashire/Cheshire/Leicester/Cheddar/Stilton/ Caerphilly.
BUTTER –	Pure/Dairy/Imported/Salted/Unsalted/English/ New Zealand/Eire.
MILK –	Homogonised/Sterilised/Pasteurised/Single cream/ Double cream.
SUGAR –	Cubed/Granulated/Icing/Caster/Demerara.
BEANS –	Butter/Runner/French/Broad/Haricot/Baked.
FLOUR –	Plain/Self-raising/Wholemeal/White/Brown.
EGGS –	Large/Small/White/Brown.

...by name, brand, weight, price and quality of product. The shopping vocabulary is large, varied, and contains innumerable classifications. Investigating this task led the group to the conclusion that the key to helping Marjorie was to be found primarily in her vocabulary of shopping and her direct experience of the shopping act. The group were however firmly convinced that assistance with word recognition, writing – to which a lot of attention must be given, – and spelling, must be an integrated part of the learning process. There was plenty of readily available material for use with the shopping theme during the first stages of tuition. Labels, cartons, instructions, recipes and retail news-sheets offered a range of texts which could be simplified if necessary for later use.

In considering spelling the group thought primarily of Marjorie's need to be able to write her own lists and here, too, meaning was stressed rather than unerring accuracy. Generally students cannot be taught how to spell but they can be shown how to learn with the aid of a few examples. A spelling rule means more when Marjorie discovers it for herself.

Shopping is a stressful activity for everybody. Part of the overall strategy for Marjorie would be to relieve this stress by going with her on shopping expeditions.

In the absence of Marjorie herself, none of the strategies discussed and illustrated by the group could be claimed to be definitive of her needs. Nevertheless each member of the group could have used the results of their collective effort with some confidence. From the information about Marjorie contained in the case study, there could be no doubt that a non-book, student-centred approach was the right one.

Most approaches to helping adults acquire greater competence in reading have relied upon printed book material, some of it quite inappropriate for adult use. Some students have considered that they are not being properly taught unless they have before them a book of one sort or another. But to accept the subsidiary importance of non-book material in all cases would be to neglect a number of fundamental questions:–

a) What are the best ways of meeting the students needs?
b) What does the student most want from the learning situation?
c) How far does the student want to go?
d) How can the student's co-operation and active effort be obtained?

It is most important to be quite clear about the objectives of the learning situations you set up with your student. The main resource available to the literacy worker is the student, and an

understanding of purposes and needs. Objectives cannot be set and methods cannot be worked out without the students' active and equal participation in structuring the learning situation.

Appendix to Shopping Task

Sources:

The material available for work on a shopping theme can provide textual material suitable for beginning reading, but many products often have a large amount of advertising material which does not lead directly to the identification of the article. If we take the cereal Shredded Wheat as an example, we will find:–

At the top left hand corner of the front of the carton, printed diagonally in a red triangle, the trade name 'Nabisco' appears. On the right upper corner there is a large numeral '18' under which is the word 'BISCUITS' printed in upper case lettering. In the centre is a picture of two Shredded Wheat biscuits in a dish with milk and a spoon. Above and to the right is a milk jug; the whole is wreathed in fronds of wheat and forming the background is a pastoral scene. Immediately below and to the left of the dish in large, psychedelic words, using four colours:

SPORTS
SUPERSTARS
6 ACTION POP-UPS
ONE FREE INSIDE

have been printed. Below this display appears 'WELGAR REGD' in smaller upper case lettering and below this, in red and right across the box are the words 'Shredded Wheat' in large lower case. At the bottom edge of the carton the slogan 'Still 100% whole wheat . . . nothing added, nothing taken away'!. Turn the box round and pictures of famous sports personalities are prominently displayed and there is not a mention of the product. The sides, top and bottom of the carton contain over 380 words of advertising text and eleven sets of numerals. Words such as triangular, registered, guarantee, activated, presenter, appropriate, reproduced, trophies, kartothene, revolutionary, etc., etc., appear.

In using this sort of material for beginning reading, consideration would have to be given to the uneven presentation, (the normal left to right top to bottom sequences are broken by illustrations and sudden variations in print size and colour,) and to the complexity of style. With the judicious use of a pair of scissors and some paper and gum this type of material can, however, be used very effectively to make attractive and appropriate teaching aids.

Example 4 Dealing with the system

In this section, we are looking at the literacy work that flows from a student's involvement in a tenants' campaign. The particular case we are using is of a student whose literacy work is also taking place in a group, and since the issue of housing is one of vital importance to everybody, it is an example of how one person's problems can be used as the basis for group literacy work. The acquisition of literacy skills in the context of a real issue can lead to the development of a person's realisation of his or her potential as an individual member of a solid campaign, with his or her own voice, and with his or her own contribution to make.

With a real issue things develop from week to week. The literacy skills needed to meet each new step **don't** come in any neat hierarchical order. For the student to have as active a role as possible in the campaign there are immediate problems to be overcome, skills to be developed to meet each new move. But there is also follow-up work to come back to later, in order to build up a student's skills and confidence. The campaign shows the relevance of using a specific situation to the teaching of the universal skills involved in all reading and writing.

Student profile

The student is a woman of about forty, married with four children. She has a job in a canteen, which involves shift work. She can read reasonably straightforward material, handling complex ideas. She reads fairly slowly but nevertheless has a firm grasp of the content of what she reads. She stumbles over unfamiliar long words, but quickly recognises them in context. She borrows books from the literacy library, and reads enthusiastically at home between classes –discussing what she's reading with her teenage children. She is constructively critical of the lessons. She is a calm and humorous person and gets on well in a group.

Her main problem is writing. Since coming to the class she has started writing quite a lot at home, about her work, her family, the class and so on, to bring back to the class the following week to be worked on. She writes uninhibitedly – a policy of write now, spell later. Most of the words that she writes are spelt wrongly, she writes without punctuation and has difficulty shaping her thoughts on the page. She likes using her own writing to base spelling work on.

Literacy Skills

Selecting the task: Five years ago, a number of people were placed in temporary accommodation by the local council. They were told it would be for a few weeks only. They are still there.

The houses are just about habitable inside, for a short stay; outside they are considerably dilapidated. They are unhygienic, and a health risk. The student, a resident, is a member of the tenants' association. Like many others, she feels angry and that something ought to be done. The tenants' association called a meeting to start a campaign to get rehoused. Her commitment to the campaign is not in doubt, but her own conception of how she can be useful is.

At a meeting of the class her own problem was voiced in a general discussion on housing. As everyone was interested, the campaign was made the focus of part of class work for several weeks. Although the sequence was based on one student's needs, others were able to apply parts of the work in their own situations. You might, of course, have a group with a shared problem. The background of the campaign – the reading and writing skills involved and the literacy tasks that were undertaken – are outlined below. Although we have mentioned one particular student, the work described can be applied to help reading and writing skills at any level. You're never too much of a beginner to join in a campaign of this sort, or to use it as the basis for literacy work.

1. The Circular

Read the CIRCULAR overleaf now.

1a. Discussion and Planning

Finding the main ideas

- Read the circular through together: the tutor or one of the students could read it aloud
- Talk about the main ideas in the text: it is important to understand the issues and relate them to your own situation: when is the meeting where is it and what is it about?

Reactions to the text

- Do I want to join the campaign (Our toilet has been broken for two months and they haven't bothered to mend it.)

plus Source of Texts — Are campaigns like this successful, and how can I find out about other campaigns?

Dear Member,

At the last meeting of the Housing Committee on September 24, the Council accepted a report from the Housing Manager delaying indefinitely the re-housing of the residents of the Bowthorne Estate.

As we see it this is the end of the road. For the past five years there have been promises, delays, new promises and nothing has happened. They have given us one excuse after another, while our housing conditions get worse all the time. No repairs have been done at all in the last year.

The time has now come for us to mount a campaign together to reverse this decision. We have a right to a decent home.

We must act now to make the Council change their mind. Come along to the next meeting of the Bowthorne Tenants' Association at the Working Men's Club, Bridge Street on

Thursday 7th November at 7.30 p.m.

to discuss joint action.

PLEASE MAKE A LIST OF YOUR OWN GRIEVANCES

IT IS VITAL THAT YOU COME: we must have solidarity to win!

Yours fraternally,

Reg. Carter

Reg Carter
Hon Secretary, Bowthorne T.A.

– Can I go to a meeting on that day?
– What are the neighbours doing about it?

Selecting New Tasks – If I join the campaign what do I need to do?

Out of the discussion, specific tasks were decided on:

Immediate tasks:

Recording Information for oneself/Follow Instructions – Record the date, the time, and the place of the meeting.

Recording Information for others/Spelling – Make a list of things wrong with house to take to the meeting.

Practise reading the circular - there may be several more if the campaign goes on.

Follow-up tasks: useful throughout the campaign.

Recording Information for Oneself – Start a diary, both of future events and of things that happen to your house, or to you in dealing with the housing department.

(a beginning student can tell the tutor what to write down: recording by language experience work).

Source of Texts – start a file on housing: collect newspaper articles, adverts etc.; find out about the law relating to housing situations.
– write to other tenants' associations to ask about their experience.

Word recognition – start a dictionary of housing words.

1b. Reading and Writing Practice from the immediate task

Recording the time, the place and the date:

- Run your eye quickly over the text to find the date of the meeting and the time:
  Copy it down on a separate piece of paper, or in the diary.
- Repeat for the place. Do you know where it is?

  Draw or buy two maps of the local area.

  On one, fill in the estate in colour, street names, the meeting place, landmarks like pubs, shops, schools.

  Leave the other blank.

  Make 2 sets of cards showing street names, the estate, landmarks etc.

How to use them:

- Match a set of cards to the filled-in map.
- Place cards on blank map in the right places.
- Play 'local words pelmanism' with both sets of cards.
- Using one of the maps, write down your route from home to: a) the meeting place b) school c) work d) the pub e) shopping.

Make a list of things wrong with the house:

These can be written or dictated by the students.

Many of the housing words may be new. They can form the basis of a dictionary of housing words, like this:

Using an alphabetical card-index system

- write new words on individual cards
- sort them into sequence by first letter of word
- extend the work, looking at the second and third letters. You could practise with short words, colouring or underlining the initial letters:

rate	flat
rent	flea
right	floor
road	flu
rule	fly

- as a group or individually, think up a number of words beginning with, say, p.
- write them on separate pieces of card or paper.
- Lay them out on the table and take turns to pick one up, sorting them into a 'dictionary', a line of cards. Then take turns to think up a meaning for each word, writing it down and placing it beside the appropriate word.

How will you want to present your list to the meeting?

- You could try typing it
- practise making rough copies before writing a final draft.

Reading the Circular: Read the text through again together, and use it as a basis for the work you are doing on developing particular reading and writing skills. With a group or an individual student, a wide variety of exercises can be prepared:

1. Take out some important words from the circular, like:
   committee housing report action tenants
   Play 'housing words lotto' with these words.

2. Add these 'key' words to your housing dictionary, sorting them into alphabet sequence.

3. Make up your own sentences using one or two of these words.

4. Odd man out:

landlord	owner	council	tenant
promise	act	delay	postpone
joint	together	group	alone

5. Using words from the circular or newspaper article on housing, make a master card with groups of three rhyming words, spelt the same way.

last	fight	flat	rent	strike	meet
fast	right	rat	sent	like	greet
past	might	fat	bent	bike	street

   - make small cards, one word on each card
   - Scatter the cards on the table

- One person picks up a card and has to find the two cards with the same ending.
- When all the cards are collected, each person has to think up a sentence/phrase or poem using all three words.
- Write the sentences down.
- Use the master card as a guide if you get stuck.

6. Many words have more than one meaning:

condition joint present club

Write each word on a card:
On the reverse side make up some sentences, e.g.

> You can come on one *condition.*
> Our housing *conditions* are getting worse and worse.

> Join the *club.*
> He was killed by a blow on the head with a *club.*

> I am going to buy her a birthday *present.*
> She was *present* at the meeting.

How to play:

- read the words
- make up your own sentences using the different meanings
- compare your students' sentences with the ones on the cards.

7. How many words can you find in

indefinitely?

8. Write out the circular, leaving out every 9th, 10th or 11th word.

Get your student to fill in the gaps with a suitable word.
Compare with the original words left out.

9. Dictate any phrases or sentences containing words the student is having trouble spelling. Check results with the words in your dictionary.

10. What does the 'end of the road' mean? Can you think of more expressions like this?

A matching game: each phrase is written on a separate card, e.g.

the end of the road	mad as a hatter
on top of the world	the last straw
out of his mind	cock a hoop

- scatter and choose in turn the two nearest in meaning to each other.
- find one word to describe each phrase
- make up sentences with the phrases, write them down.

11. Beginnings, middles and endings: break long words down into roots, prefixes and suffixes to help understand their spelling: e.g. indefinitely.

in – defin – ite – ly

show how many words come from this one pattern:

define confine
definite
indefinite
definitely
indefinitely

Use these words in sentences you make up.

12. throughout the campaign, texts such as the circular, petitions, agendas and newspaper articles can also be exploited for examples of the sounds and spelling patterns you are working on, e.g. silent 'e', ch, sh, ee, oa.

2. The Meeting

Bowthorne Tenants' Association

AGENDA

1. Apologies for Absence
2. Minutes
3. Matters Arising
4. Officers' Report
5. Resolutions

The following resolutions have been submitted:

'That Bowthorne Tenants' Association invite the Chairman of the Housing Committee and the Councillors for Wheelergate ward to a public meeting on the re-housing of tenants on the Bowthorne Estate; that a petition be circulated, supporting the re-housing of tenants, and a march be organised to present this petition at the Town Hall'

Proposed: John Williams

'That the officers of the Bowthorne Tenants' Association should draw up a plan for renovating houses on the estate, provide costing, and present them to the Housing Committee.'

Proposed: Tony Harris

'That Bowthorne Tenants' Association note the failure of the Council to honour their promises over five years, and pursue their case by organising a rent strike to start as soon as possible; and that signatures be collected for a petition of support for re-housing tenants on the Bowthorne Estate'

Proposed: Mary Harvey

6. Any Other Business.

2a. Discussion and Planning: Selecting the Task

Read through the agenda together
– what reading and writing skills are going to be needed at the meeting? What are your going to need to decide at the meeting?

Reactions to the Text:

Which skills are essential?

Are they different if you are going to take an active or a passive role in the meeting?

What do *you* need to know to take an active part in the meeting?

What are the advantages of renovation as against re-housing?

What will the different effects of passing each of the motions be? Which is most likely to lead to your getting better housing?

From the discussion of these questions in the class, it was decided to concentrate, for classwork, on reading the agenda and making notes. As follow up work, reading, writing and distributing minutes can be worked on.

Intermediate Tasks: Reading the agenda

Understand links between speech and print	Read the agenda through
Awareness of order and contents of text	How is an agenda laid out? Why?
Word recognition	What words do you often find on agendas? What do 'apologies' and 'any other business' mean here?
Finding the main ideas	Which are the most important items on the agenda? How will you choose which resolution to support?
Communication for others	Practise making your own agenda. How would you word a resolution?

		If you were a councillor, how do you think you would react to each of the motions?
Making notes	Find the main idea	Draw here on the diary work started in the first week. Read back over what has been written (or transcribed from a tape), and isolate the main points.
	Written communication for self	Write them down
	Spelling	Think back over the discussion at the meeting. What were the main points? write them down.
Follow up Tasks:	Find out the facts	e.g. see '*You and the Law*' in Write First Time; or write to NCCL. Is there anything in your housing file on the success of rent strikes, or of renovations? Is there a Rights Centre nearby where you can find out more? Where else can you get more information?

2b. Main Exercise

The group plan a literacy class meeting on different issues: e.g.

1. Individual versus group work.
2. The length of the coffee break.
3. Noise in the classroom.

- Prepare the agenda
- Type it up
- Distribute it
- At the meeting, appoint a chairperson, and someone to take the minutes of decisions taken
- Write up the minutes
- Distribute them
- Read and discuss them at the next class

Other Exercises

Substitution exercise using the original agenda.

Record your own ideas of what happens at the meeting: this offers possibilities for Language Experience work for a beginner, working practice for the student in our profile. This will expand work begun on the diary and dictionary.

Exploit the text for phonic/spelling patterns you are working on at the moment.

Reading, Writing or Distributing Minutes

Like agendas, minutes have special characteristics. Take an old set of minutes, ideally from the last meeting of the tenants' association, and work with it in the same way we approached the circular. Compare it with other minutes.

Practise writing your own minutes of the meeting. (To distribute minutes, you need to know street names. Work on the street map can help with this).

3. The Petition

> "The residents of Bowthorne estate call on the council to ensure that they are re-housed in suitable accommodation within the next three months."

3a. Discussion and Planning

At each stage of the campaign, the discussion and planning is central to the literacy work that goes on. Perhaps you would like to work through the rest of this campaign. Look again at how the sequence of discussion in the work on The Circular and The Meeting draws on the tasks and skills outlined earlier in the book. Don't stick religiously to all of the questions, but use them to guide you to the exercises *you* might do.

3b. Immediate Tasks

In our discussions, we agreed that it is vital to understand anything you sign your name to. We discussed the meaning of the petition, re-wrote it together, and discussed the reasons we would use to persuade people to support the campaign. The main exercise was to follow up from the class meeting. The class also made a petition to present to the Principal, asking to have the class open outside of school terms, and decided to collect signatures from students in other literacy classes before presenting it.

4. The March

The tenants and their supporters planned to march to the Town Hall, carrying banners with slogans, to hand in the petition. A letter was to accompany the petition.

4a. Discussion, Planning and Exercises

Again you might like to think about the literacy skills involved in detail. We concentrated on making a banner – finding catchy phrases, like these, from material collected in the housing file:

'GIVE US THE MONEY, WE'LL DO THE REST'
'IMPROVE OUR HOMES, WE'D DO IT BEST'

'HOUSES FOR PEOPLE NOT RATS'

From this slogan came

I'd like a house or even a flat
but I'm not going to share it
with a big fat rat.

These phrases aren't empty: we spent a lot of time talking about what it is like to have rats in a house with small children, about how you get rid of them, and why they are dangerous.

You can use rhymes for phonic work, *if the spelling is the same*, but we felt the main advantage of using the march for literacy work came from the variety and power of language in the slogans.

For our main exercise, we concentrated on the letter that accompanied the petition, writing one in the class, looking in particular at layout, vocabulary, sentence structure, and paragraphing. We discussed the importance of keeping a copy of the letters you write, and considered whether or not to use a typewriter.

5. Renovation and a rent strike

One proposal is to withhold rent during negotiations with the Council, to pay it into a central account, and to suggest that this money be used as the first instalment in a renovation scheme.

5a. Discussion, Planning and Exercises

We talked about the strengths and weaknesses of rent strikes, and looked for examples in the housing file:

'Once there was a rent strike
The people would not pay,
This the council did not like
But the tenants had their way.'

(from a poem by Brian Dillon in 'The People Marching On', English Dept., Langdon Park School, Limehouse, London 1976.)

This discussion widened into a general one on how you get your rights in our society. It went on to raise the worry about getting behind with bills, and arrears, and we decided for literacy work to focus on opening an account at a post office or savings bank:

It involved – form filling, (using withdrawal and deposit slips),

- comparing advertisements (what are the interest rates?). Can you get your money out quickly? Are there any other advantages and disadvantages?);
- Social sight work on the vocabulary needed for financial transactions;
- signature practice – checking statements – keeping your own records.

6. Publicity

Sustaining the campaign can become difficult. Tenants decide that their case needs press publicity. They need to make their newsletters easier to read to persuade people not to drop out. They decide to phone a local paper, brief a reporter, and to take their own photographs.

6a. Discussion, Planning and Exercises

Discussion again focussed on the skills needed to be actively involved in publicising the campaign. A variety of exercises were identified:

- Deciding which local paper was likely to be sympathetic
- Listing the repairs which hadn't been carried out, to be given to the reporter, (and typing the list?).
- Work on using a phone (see Example 2).
- Reading and evaluating the articles when they were published.

The group decided, however, to concentrate on taking photographs of the tenants' poor housing conditions, to be used in publicity; to develop and print the photographs together, and to write about the photographs when they were printed.

Conclusion

Much of the literacy work initiated in the first week continued throughout: the diary, the list of housing words, the housing file on other people's homes, and the reading of newsletters and circulars produced by the campaign. Much of the work, indeed, can carry on whatever happens to the campaign – a diary, a bank account, letter writing and form filling have other functions. In any of the areas of work we have considered, a far wider range of examples can be used. What we have tried to show is that working to the student's immediate needs will provide you with more than enough ideas for literacy work for one lesson a week. The work on phonics, spelling, handwriting, context cueing, and so on can all be fitted to these tasks in an immediately relevant setting.

But what is particularly distinctive about working to the student's needs is that reading and writing are seen as tools that have a real effect upon a real world: they are seen to have power.

Chapter 4 Practical work: some guidelines

For volunteer tutors working in 1:1

a. You need other people

In saying this we are talking from our own experience. Everyone has their own way of tackling specific reading and writing tasks. By working with two or three other people a variety of working methods and ideas can be explored. They can be discussed at some length and you will discover a lot more about your own reading and writing, as we have.

b. You will want to work through one or more of the examples

By going through some of the previous examples together, you will begin to see the ways in which you can approach your teaching. None of us have worked in exactly the same way and you will want to adapt your approach to suit your student and your situation.

By working through the previous examples, you will find that you are working on two levels. First, what skills are involved when *you* tackle the specific task and second, relating this work to one student and developing the skills which he/she will need. The two level approach is a difficult concept to grasp. When you first work on the skills needed for a certain task you are not thinking in terms of your student but of yourself. We, and a lot of people we have worked with, have needed to go through specific examples together to really grasp the approach being used. For this reason we are asking you to work through the previous chapter before starting on your own chosen task.

c. You will want to allow yourselves plenty of time

The first time we worked with other people using tasks and skills was at a weekend workshop. We had planned the time schedule very carefully and felt we had allowed the right amount of time for each activity. When the time allotted for the tasks and skills work was complete, no group had finished. Some had almost finished but others wanted to continue for another two or three hours. It seems that once a group have got together and started working, so much needs to be discussed and explored. This is good and the more time you can spend in this way the better. But we feel it is important to point out how the time can vanish.

Remember, then, if you should want to produce some materials at the end, either know that you have all the time in the world or try to allow two or three mornings, afternoons or evenings together. If you find it takes you a very short time to work through the planning of one task, then apply the task to a particular student and prepare working materials for him/her – you can always go on to find another task applicable to one of the other students.

You cannot do long term planning, as the student will be providing a lot of the material and dictating the direction in future sessions. You know your student best and you will want to select from the ideas raised the ones most suitable for his/her needs.

For tutors working with a group of students

The main points you need to think about before starting are

a) The students' strengths
b) Selection of task
c) Size of the working group
d) A possible framework

We have taken each of these headings and explored them in greater depth below.

a. The students' strengths

You will need to be aware of the strengths of each member of the group so that any work carried out can draw on these strengths.

The follow-up activities on specific skills need to be tailored to each individual. The group you are working with bring a wide variety of experiences and skills to the sessions and each person may require work different to the other members of the group. Sometimes an activity can be geared to suit two or three people's needs at the same time – but this is not as often as we would like to think! If you are going to use one worksheet with the whole group, you must discuss the content and work involved first.

b. Selection of the task

If the issue raised concerns more than one person in the group, then it would be worth considering as a group activity. But if only one person is involved, it would be better to decide whether there is enough time and manpower to work through the task and its related skills with the individual.

Refer back to the example in the previous chapter 'Dealing with the System'. You will see that this is a subject that involved several people. Whatever their level of reading and writing, they were able to contribute a great deal both from their own experiences and those of their friends and relatives. They were interested – perhaps only one had an immediate need in using the skills involved in the task – but the others had a strong interest and might see a long-term need in developing some of these skills.

It is not for you to plan a programme in abstract. You could find that no one is interested and all your work would be wasted. The suggestions will come from the students and it is for you to cash in on these and develop work from them. Don't feel you have to grab every task suggested. Bide your time and select a task that your students find interesting and useful and also one that you will feel happy to work through.

As we have mentioned when working with individual students, you will talk through the task with the students and then introduce some specific work on the skills involved. Don't be afraid of silence – people take time to think. There may be conflicting views – but this is not necessarily a bad thing. It is very likely that there is an immediate need to be met in working through the task as a whole rather than imposing delays while you work on a specific skill before moving on.

c. Size of the working group

The size of the group is something you will need to think about. A maximum number we would suggest is six. This does not stop you from forming a sub-group of two or more people. Students can work individually on specific activities within this structure. Members of the group will often decide to work with one or two others – sharing information, experience and helping each other to develop specific skills. We have found that some of the best teachers are the students themselves – so don't waste this valuable asset. You may consider inviting other people to help you – a volunteer to work with one student or a sub-group, someone with special knowledge of the task.

d. Possible framework

In the beginning stages of a project a cassette tape recorder is worth its weight in gold. Mind you don't get carried away with the taping – especially if you decide a lot of the taped discussion is useful and needs to be transcribed for later use – as transcribing takes a long, long time. We have learnt the hard way! It is better

to try and work with the students early on in editing the tape and transcribing only the most valuable parts. Other points can be taken down in an annotated form.

- An issue comes up that is likely to be of interest to more than one member of the group.
- How many people are involved?
- Are you going to work as a whole group or as a sub-group?
- The interested people form the working group. This group discusses the issue and where to go to get more information.
- Are you using a tape recorder or is someone taking notes?
- Can one of the students write down the names of people and organisations who can be contacted for further information?
- Who is going to make the contact – one person or several people?
- When are you going to need all the information?

Having collated the information, you may want to record relevant passages for either the whole group or a sub-group to listen to and then tape-record their subsequent discussion. You may decide to ask one of the students to read the selected text to the group. Do go over the passage with him first.

The group will want to discuss the next steps and decide what action the group and members within the group can take. This could involve a variety of literacy skills. You will need to be aware of how much support individuals will need in carrying out their specified tasks. At this time you will work through the activities with the students and make a note of the skills that require further work.

Is it possible that two or three students can work together and jointly provide the skills required?

In this way the development of the issue is not suspended or delayed and you are much more aware of the specific skills students need to practise.

Each individual can undertake follow-up literacy skills work according to their level of achievement and need. For example, a new reader can do some work on language-experience. An intermediate reader could explore an activity like 'change-the-sentence' and perhaps learn a new group of words with some relevant digraph, whilst spellers could use 'proof-reading' and learning strategies on words newly met in the course of the project.

AT ALL LEVELS THE WORK IS BASED ON LANGUAGE FROM THE PROJECT.

A lot more activities can be adapted from the suggestions in the previous chapter and we feel sure you have innumerable ideas yourself.

For organisers

There are many points raised by the previous sections which concern you as the organiser. Look at the list of questions below and see how many you have already begun to consider.

1. Do I need to alter the way I allocate money in the scheme?
2. How can I judge what sort of re-allocation of money is appropriate?
3. Do I need to alter the time allocation I have, and other scheme workers have?
4. Do we need a different system of storage for resources?
5. To whom should the resources be available?
6. How does this approach to literacy affect my training programme – initial and follow-up?
7. What opportunities do I need to provide for tutors and students to work together?

Let's take each question in turn.

1. Do I need to alter the way I allocate money?

It depends on what you are doing now. What is involved is:

a) the spending of money on materials which are disposable. You need things that tutors and students can cut up, write on, or fold: in other words things they can really *use*. These will probably include local papers, daily papers, hobby/interest magazines, copies of the Highway Code.

b) Spending money on factual and reference books for students – range of dictionaries, of differing levels of difficulty, information books on a range of subjects, appropriate to the students in your scheme.

c) Spending money on factual and reference books for all tutors – dictionaries of meanings, of origins of words, or rhyming words, of slang etc. Books on teaching techniques, and with teaching ideas in them: photographs – of the local area, of people, of places.

d) Spending time (see Question 3 below) discovering what local printed materials are available – hand-outs from local clubs,

maps of the area, community organisations, hospitals, schools etc. They may be helpful to students and tutors.

e) Spending time collecting free written material for use by all – maps of bus routes, labels, post office leaflets, N.H.S. leaflets, advertising magazines, telephone directories . . .

2. How can I judge what sort of re-allocation of money is appropriate

- Talk to other people in your scheme, if you have colleagues.
- Arrange to visit another near-by scheme and see how it is run. Talk with the organiser about possible ways of re-organising.
- Look at the B.A.S Organisers Pack.
- By trial and error!

3. Do I need to alter my time-allocation?

- You may find you need more time to talk and plan with other people e.g. The local Polytechnic photographic department – to arrange photos of local buildings, street signs etc.
- You may also decide you need to spend more time supporting your tutors – by visits, follow-up training or re-interviewing.
- You may not need to make any change.

4. A different storage system?

- Looking at the range of resources suggested in Question 1 above it is clear that resources must be *available* for use. Are yours?
- You may already, or you may need to, keep tape recorders and other machines locked up, but they should be as easily accessible as possible to tutors and students.
- Consider whether to keep materials for tutors and materials for students separate. The overlap is huge, so is a separation practical and/or desirable?
- How and where do you store your duplicating equipment? Is it available to tutors and students? Maybe it should be. Then they can add to your stock of resources by running off copies of writing and work sheets that they have developed.
- What is the best way to store loose articles, cartoons or photos? Perhaps in large trays, perhaps in wallet folders or in shallow drawers. Consider the possibilities for your scheme and *look* around at a range of storage methods used outside the educational field.

5. To whom should the resources be available?

This has been largely covered by Question 4 above.

- Tutors will want access to reference material for their own support and also access to disposable material to use in their teaching.
- Students in most schemes will be at different points with their reading and writing. They are quite able to see what is too advanced in reading material. But the *subject* matter may be ideal, in which case the tutor can help out. Self-selection of reading material is an important aspect of independence.

6. How does this approach to literacy affect my training programme?

- It may well mean changing your initial training programme.
- It may mean leaving much of the content of an initial training programme to a later date and concentrating on explaining and practising this approach.
- Is it realistic or possible to include students in the training of tutors? If they are prepared to come they may be able to offer invaluable insights and comments.
- You may need to re-consider the size of the group for initial training. Is it too large? Too small?
- You will need to include some work, in the initial training, on simplification of texts – showing your tutors how to write material which is at an easy reading level but adult in content (maybe taken from a newspaper article).
- Follow-up training will undoubtedly be needed. Are you going to make it 'compulsory'? How? If it is to be voluntary how will you ensure people come often enough? *All* organisers face these questions. Solutions are not easy, but they can be worked on – talk to other organisers.

7 What opportunities do I need to provide for tutors and students to work together?

- There is great benefit to be had from tutors meeting together to discuss their work and share teaching ideas. You could book dates at your centre for tutors to come, or let them arrange meetings in small groups, with you providing the necessary names and addresses.
- Some schemes have had great success by making the opportunity for tutor–student pairs to meet and work together on a project – a local issue perhaps. You may want to try it out.
- Do the students in your scheme want to meet together to talk and share experiences? It may be helpful if you set it up.
- What about social events for students and tutors? See the B.A.S. Organiser's Pack for a range of activities.

Appendix Some questions to ask

This Appendix raises three issues which may be helpful in implementing the ideas contained in this book: the production of a newsletter to facilitate communications among all who are involved in a scheme; the value of using a cassette recorder; and the issues involved in writing simplified texts.

When producing a newsletter

Communication between tutors, students and organisers is essential for the success and development of any literacy project. Letters announcing dates and times tend to grow into news-sheets, and then, as the amount of information to be passed on increases, into newsletters.

The questions below are both practical and theoretical; and we feel, from our experience, that it would be useful to consider them, and the issues they raise, before the newsletter assumes a particular shape and pattern.

1. What is the purpose in producing a newsletter and what do you hope it will achieve?

2. Who is the newsletter designed for?
   - students?
   - tutors?
   - outside agencies?

3. Who will produce it?
   - the organiser and paid staff?
   - scheme participants – volunteers/students?

4. Who will be primarily responsible for the following tasks:
   - organiser? - student? - tutor? - ancillary staff?

   a. deciding what to print
   b. proof reading
   c. deciding typeface and layout
   d. illustrations
   e. typing

f. duplicating
g. editorial writing
h. addressing envelopes
i. distribution

5. What method will you use to produce it, considering the following?
   a. cost
   b. quality of production
   c. reproduction of illustrations
   d. time involved

6. Do you want it to cater for different reading abilities? If so, how are you going to achieve this? For instance,
   a. will you have different print sizes?
   b. how important is layout?

7. How much will it cost to produce?
   a. how many copies will you produce?
   b. will it be free or for sale?
   c. how will it be financed?
   d. how frequently will it be produced?

8. How will it be distributed? (This can be THE major problem, even in a town)
   a. by post?
   b. collected from scheme office?
   c. distributed by hand?

9. If you had to choose 6 of these 10 pieces of copy to complete your newsletter, which would you choose?
   a. diary of events
   b. review of "George and the Bus" written by a student
   c. a short easy-read piece on boxing by a student
   d. an article on teaching aids written by a tutor
   e. crossword

f. picture of the demolition of Council houses prior to the erection of Council flats, with emotive words on the picture, such as: old people, play, overcrowding, planner, money, Council, modern, roses, rent, Rachman

g. student article on the local museum

h. transcript of a tape-recording describing working in a bakery by a student

i. a letter from a tutor saying that she should choose her student's material until he can read himself

j. a funny story written and illustrated by a student, containing swear words

What criteria did you use in choosing the 6?

10. As a whole, would you see your newsletter as primarily REFLECTING or as primarily INFLUENCING?

How important is this question?

11. Does your newsletter defer to the pattern of language and culture of the majority of its readers?

If the answer is "Yes", is this a good thing?

If "No", why not?

When using a tape recorder

1. Are you using it to **replace** you or supplement what you are able to do? It should be the latter.
2. Have you checked the batteries, microphone, leads, plug and tape **before** the session?
3. If you have recorded a piece for the lesson, are you clear as to its use? Is the quality of it adequate?
4. Will the student be confused by the lack of instruction given on the tape?
5. Have you used the tape to let your student read or practise a piece? Could this be a useful way to use it?
6. Have you tried recording a context cueing exercise on tape, with a written script to go with it? This could be useful for a student to do at home if he wanted to. He could prepare one for you to do.
7. Have you used a tape recorder for recording a radio programme your student is interested in?
   It could be the source of a great deal of work.
8. Have you tried learning, together, how to conduct an interview on tape. The preparation, discussion and editing that will follow is very valuable, and it's a shared learning experience. (You may need to call in 'an expert' to advise you both).
9. Have you tried building up a story made up entirely of sound effects? Try it together. Learning to plan the sequence of events and identify the right noise is creative work. It can be written up afterwards if you both decide you want to.
10. Can you both record your autobiography, in 'chapters' as a summer project – over the long break. You can then compare your lives and talk about what you each included or omitted to say. It needs confidence on both sides!

When simplifying a text

The purpose of a simplified text to to provide students with relevant reading matter which is easier to learn than the original from which it is taken.

When to simplify

1. Simplify texts which are of long-term need or interest to your student.
2. As a generalization, simplify texts that have a factual or information-giving purpose.

When not to simplify

1. When the actual text is so important that it, and it alone, must be used.
2. When the text concerned is not of real importance to your student.
3. When the information needed from the text is such a minor part of it that simplifying it will not be worth while. In such circumstances a short discussion may be all that is necessary, followed by the learning of some essential words or phrases.

How to simplify a text

1. Make sure that the text really is relevant for your student.
2. Involve your student in the process of simplifying the text. This has two advantages: firstly the resulting text will be more understandable to your student, and secondly you will be involved in less pre-session preparation.
3. Look for the overall meaning and the main ideas in the text. If you try and simplify each sentence in turn you will almost certainly "miss the wood for the trees". Don't hesitate to list all the items you wish to include, and then re-write the text completely. There are almost certainly going to be details in any text which your student will tell you are irrelevant and can be left out.
4. Do not simplify words and phrases that are essential to the subject matter. This is patronizing to your student who will probably use those words in his speech, or at any rate understand them. (We all understand many more words than we use).
5. It is usual to take the view that the shorter a sentence is, the easier it is to read, or to learn to read. This is a rather short-sighted view, however. Sentence lengths in much adult reading matter are very long, and usually made so by the piling up of subordinate clauses. Such sentences can easily be simplified by cutting them down to the essential idea. Some simplified texts go far too far in this direction, and an idea that can only be expressed in a single sentence may be split up across several. The result is ludicrous.

6. Pay as little attention as possible to repeating words, until you have completed a first effort. Repetition of words is obviously useful, but it should not take over from the goal of providing a text which is written in sensible English.

Simplification: An example

The following paragraph is taken from the P.P.I.A.S. (Parent to Parent Information on Adoption Services) Newsletter No. 13 June 1976, and we gratefully acknowledge permission to reprint here:

ADOPTING A HANDICAPPED CHILD

A handicap is part of a whole person and will affect that person for all of his life, however well he compensates. A handicapped child can have as strong a personality, likes and dislikes, temper and sense of humour as any other child, but the way he copes with his disability will be influenced by the degree of early acceptance of him as a whole person, by those around him.

The most severely handicapped child will make progress in a loving home of his own, but parents considering this kind of adoption must clearly understand the term 'handicap' and whether they feel they could respond to mental, physical, emotional or multi-handicap and to what degree.

Parents who feel they could cope with a handicapped child may find themselves becoming increasingly, if unwillingly, repulsed by the more gross handicaps, and it may help them to gauge their capabilities and prepare themselves if they got to know some handicapped children and their families beforehand; to see families experiencing the heights and depths of emotional turmoil, the joys as well as the sorrows. If parents decide to adopt a mentally handicapped baby, they must realise that the handicap could take any form and that they will in many ways have a permanent child in an adult body, but they may also receive a continuous childlike devoted love without the difficulties of 'normal' adolescence. Hospitalization may become necessary at a later stage, and to be prepared for the guilt that such an event might bring can be a help in coming to terms with it.

Choosing to adopt a handicapped child has the obvious advantages of probable previous parental experience and the opportunity to prepare oneself and one's family for a sometimes difficult but very rewarding life.

Simplified version:

"Before you adopt a handicapped child
you will need to understand a number of things.

You will need to understand the child as a person.

You will need to understand his handicap,
and you will need to understand yourself.

The handicapped child is a whole person.

He has likes and dislikes.

He has a temper and a sense of humour.

How he copes with his handicap
depends on how far he is accepted.

In a loving home
even the most handicapped child will make progress.

There are many kinds of handicap.
Some get more difficult to live with as time goes by.

You will need to decide
which kinds of handicap you could live with,
and which you could not.

Sometimes a handicapped person has to be hospitalized.

You will need to understand
your guilt feelings if this happens.

The best way to get ready for adoption
is to meet families with handicapped children.

You will see that they have their joys as well as sorrows."

In simplifying this passage, we had no particular student in mind. Therefore, the information was chosen "in the abstract". We have sought to vary the sentence lengths, and tried to preserve, as far as possible, words which should not be simplified. We have tried to avoid language which is rather removed from speech: ". . .experiencing the heights and depths of emotional turmoil" is a good instance of this.

We have also re-sequenced some of the information in a way which we felt might be more helpful. Finally, would you please look carefully at the sentence and phrase layout of the text. We have tried to end a line at a "natural break", as this makes it easier for a new reader to learn to read such a passage with meaning.

Summary

We offer these ten questions as a framework for any simplification you may wish to undertake with your student:

1. Does the passage chosen contain information for which your student has indicated some long-term need or interest?
2. Have you discussed the passage fully with your student?
3. Have you read the passage several times for its overall meaning and impact?
4. Have you listed the main ideas, or facts, and arranged them with your student in a sequence that he or she finds suitable?
5. Have you respected the key terms of the subject matter?
6. Have you written sensible English?
7. Have you avoided "literary" words and phrases in favour of more usual spoken forms?
8. How artificial, or obtrusive, is any repetition of words in the text?
9. Have you laid out the text in good clear print, using capitals where we would normally do so, and not breaking phrase or sentence meaning across different lines?
10. How does the text feel as a whole when you read it back?

This is the end of our book, but we hope it is only the start for you. We have been able to include a few examples, but you now have the opportunity to explore others in greater depth.

The contents of this book have to stand still. We would never have got into print if we had continued to add all the new ideas that are being tried out.

We hope you will find the book a useful starting point and will share and develop the ideas from here with other people.

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February 1977